CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

RESIDENCE

USUALLY REQUIRED

FOR DEGREES

IN

THE UNIVERSITY

OF

OXFORD.

OXFORD:

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ERRATA.

P. 11. L. 14. read *intermediate.*

P. 14. L. 10. after *if* dele *the Comma.*

P. 16. L. *ult.* read *months.*

P. 19. L. 20. read *latter.*

P. 19. L. 21. read *former.*

CONSIDERATIONS &c.

THE Statutes of this Univerſity require, for the degree of Bachelor of Arts, the moderate reſidence of ſixteen terms or twelve calendar months; for the degree of Maſter of Arts twelve terms or nine calendar months. By an ordinary diſpenſation and liberal conſtruction they reduce the former reſidence to twelve terms or nine months, the latter to ſeven terms or about five months. For the ſuperior degrees they require no reſidence. So that for all the honours the Univerſity has to confer, from the Bachelor of Arts up to the Doctor in each Faculty, the ſtatutable reſidence is nineteen terms or about fourteen calendar months. Of the ſeven terms above mentioned requiſite to the degree of Maſter of Arts, the indulgence of Convocation has uſually taken off four; and the conceſſion

has been ſo frequent and uninterrupted, that the Candidate, unleſs indeed there be ſomething very particular in his caſe, has a moral certainty of obtaining it. This diſpenſation, added to the abatements above ſtated, reduces the ſtatutable reſidence for the degree of Maſter of Arts, to three terms or about two months; and, in conſequence, that for all the degrees put together, to Eleven Months.

Notwithſtanding the apparent moderation of our Statutes and the lenity of our Convocation herein, ſeveral attempts have been made within theſe few years, ſome ſucceſsfully and ſome otherwiſe, to reduce the ſtatutable reſidence to ſtill narrower limits. One term has now and then, though very rarely, been given to a Candidate for the degree of Bachelor of Arts; and a late petitioner has been ſo ill-adviſed as to aſk for two. Five terms have been granted, (it is humbly apprehended, too often) to a Candidate for the degree of Maſter of Arts; and in ſome few caſes, though never without oppoſition, even ſix.

It is preſumed that the meaſure which the Convocation propoſes to itſelf in diſpenſing

theſe favours, is probably this: " to abate " the ſuppoſed rigour of the Statutes in con- " deſcenſion to private convenience, ſo far " only, as they they can do it without de- " feating the true end of Academical " Education, and depreciating Academical " Honours in the eyes of the world." If the petitioner can be accommodated conſiſtently with theſe important conſiderations, the Houſe uſually inclines to the equitable ſide.

It ſeems pretty evident that the general deſign of Academical Education, is either to prepare the Student for the ſtudy of one of the three Faculties; or, if not intended for either of them, to furniſh him with ſuch a competent ſhare of uſeful learning, as may enable him to paſs through his department, whether in private or in publick life, with ſome degree of credit to himſelf and advantage to Society. In the caſe of Students intended for, or engaged in, the profeſſion of Divinity, it is, in the preſent ſyſtem of inſtitution, more comprehenſive; the improvements They are expected to make during their firſt reſidence in the Univerſity, are not only the general baſis of their fu-

ture ſtudies, as in Law and Phyſic, but the actual preparation and immediate qualification for the exerciſe of their profeſſion: ſo that, by the time they are five years ſtanding, they are generally admitted to the full exerciſe of their function, and their preparatory ſtudies are at an end. And Students in this Faculty make up probably three fourths of the Candidates for degrees.

Now for either of theſe purpoſes, the latter eſpecially, were any Reaſonable Man to aſſign a *Minimum* to be eſtabliſhed by publick authority, could he poſſibly think of preſcribing a leſs portion of time, out of the original allotment of ſeven years, than Eleven Months? Is it with any degree of probability to be ſuppoſed, even under the moſt favourable circumſtances, that leſs than double that time would be requiſite to make ſuch a moderate progreſs in Claſſical Learning and Philoſophy, as would qualify the Student either to ſupport a decent character in the world as a Gentleman and a Man of Education, or to begin his ſtudies in Law or Phyſick? Is it not ſtill more inconceivable, that the Student in Divinity ſhould, within ſo ſhort a period, have accumulated upon the

fund of this general learning, ſuch a knowledge of the elements of his Particular Profeſſion, as may qualify him to be admitted immediately to the actual exerciſe of it?

In anſwer to this, two candid conſiderations may perhaps be offered. The one, that the Student who keeps terms equivalent to eleven months may probably have been obliged by his diſtant ſituation or other local circumſtances, to have reſided, for that purpoſe, double the time: the other, that though it be his Academical Inſtitution which muſt furniſh him with the ſketch of his ſtudies, and give a due direction to his literary purſuits, yet nothing hinders but that, by a prudent diſpoſition of his time elſewhere, he may with great advantage have filled up the outline, and carried on his labours ſucceſsfully to the end in view.

As to the Firſt, what is aſſerted does, I believe, frequently happen in the caſe of the degree of Bachelor of Arts, very rarely in that of the Maſter. We have already allowed for it in the argument. But the true reply is, that whatever extraordinary reſidence of this kind the Candidate may accidentally

have kept, the Univerſity has *no ſecurity* for it. It is uſual with laws to preſcribe that mode of proceeding which appears generally moſt conducive to the end in view; and though ſome other mode may poſſibly in particular caſes anſwer the end as well, yet in all reaſon and equity the particular caſe ought to give way to the general tendency, and private judgment and convenience, to public wiſdom and public good. The kind of reſidence laid down in the Statutes is the only reſidence which the Convocation can conſider, or of which they can have any aſſurance. Beſides in fact this extraordinary reſidence does but fulfil the plain intention of the legiſlature. The Univerſity doubtleſs intended her younger members to reſide the greateſt part of the whole ſeven years; and, to lead them to this General Reſidence, abſolutely enjoins particular portions of it, diſtributed into the ſeveral terms. And thoſe who plead for a ſtatutable reſidence are not, I preſume, ſo ſuperficial in their views, as to conceive that a fornight's battelling in a College will render the Term-Keeper a wiſer or a better man; but that the neceſſity of this partial reſidence and occaſional application to academical ſtudies will probably induce him to take the be-

nefit offered him, as well as (what he may think) the burthen impoſed upon him; to continue in the Univerſity for real improvement, as well as to ſojourn there for convenience: they would guard the letter of the ſtatute, in order to preſerve the ſpirit of it. If the party chuſes to *evade* this advantage, or if his circumſtances will not permit him to take it, he pays obedience however to the laws of his community; and profits by it, either as much as was in his inclination, or as much as was in his power.

As to the Second conſideration, the Univerſity has admitted the force of it in her regulation touching the Superior degrees. And, as it ſhould ſeem, with great wiſdom. Men of mature age, who have gone through the elements and inferior branches of ſcience with reputation, may well be truſted with the direction of their own ſtudies, and the choice of their place of reſidence wherein to proſecute them. Beſides it would be an inſufferable injury to Society, to detain men well qualified for their ſervice, in purſuit of honours, which have no other value or meaſure, than their reference to Public Good: it would be to miſtake the means for the end. Upon the

ſame principles, it is preſumed, the wiſdom of Convocation has for ſome time paſt extended a moderate portion of this indulgence to the degree of Maſter of Arts. As members of the Univerſity are frequently at age to enter into Holy Orders, or are called off to the ſtudy of the other Faculties, ſoon after they have been admitted to their firſt degree, the Convocation has thought it not unreaſonable, provided they keep the former part of their reſidence, to diſpenſe with the latter; and thus, by the time they are five years ſtanding, to allow them every privilege of a Candidate for the ſuperior degrees. And ſo far they appear to have proceeded with great equity and propriety. But the caſe of the Younger Members of the Univerſity ſeems to be widely different. They are at an age wherein they are ſeldom capable of proſecuting their ſtudies without aſſiſtance, and ſtill more rarely inclined to do it, without the ſpur of emulation, and the reſtraint of public inſtitution and authority. The Univerſity therefore with the utmoſt reaſon demands their attendance on her diſcipline, as the *moſt probable* method of providing for their improvement, and rendering them worthy of her honours. They may doubtleſs have able inſtructors, and make proportional

improvements, in other places; but for this, again, the Univerſity has *no ſecurity*; and as ſhe is hereafter to confer the laurel, it ſeems highly reaſonable that ſhe ſhould have all poſſible aſſurances that the party has duly run his race.

It ſhould ſeem therefore, that to anſwer any end of Academical Education, the Univerſity cannot with any degree of propriety require a ſhorter reſidence than Eleven Months for the two inferior degrees. If the candidate can with double or treble that reſidence in the Univerſity, and ſuch improvements as he ſhall make during his immediate receſs, take his degrees with reputation, and fulfil in a fair meaſure the deſign of his coming hither, I think he will have no reaſon to be diſſatisfied either with the Univerſity or himſelf.

I preſume that the true value of Academical Honours, in the view of reaſonable and ſenſible men, will probably conſiſt in this; that they intimate that the perſon on whom they are conferred has had, what we call, a *Regular* Education, that is to ſay, that he has been bred up in a Seat of Learning, where

he has had an *opportunity* at leaſt of improving his underſtanding, and paſſed a moderate *teſt* of his having in ſome meaſure availed himſelf of this opportunity: and the value of a higher Academical Honour, in compariſon with a lower, will in like manner conſiſt in it's implying a *more extenſive* opportunity, and a teſt ſomething *more comprehenſive*. It is upon theſe conſiderations, I conceive, that we reckon a degree taken at one of our Engliſh Univerſities or at Dublin more reſpectable than one taken in Scotland. Every one knows that the Scotch Univerſities are by no means deſtitute of able and diligent Profeſſors, and that they daily contribute to the Republic of letters their proportion of eminent men: one of them in particular, as a ſchool for One faculty, has obtained a Superiority over the Engliſh Univerſities, which it would betray great partiality to paſs over in ſilence; a ſuperiority, which has already excited, and will doubtleſs, more and more every day, an honourable and ſucceſsful emulation. Why then is not a degree taken in Edinburgh or Glaſgow as creditable as one taken in Oxford or Cambridge? Plainly for this reaſon, becauſe it does not imply a *Regular Education*:

it does not *neceſſarily indicate* that the Graduate has *reſided* in his Univerſity, had a fair opportunity before him of proſecuting his ſtudies with advantage under her direction and aſſiſtance, and given ſome decent ſpecimen of his improvements. Thus do Academical Honours conferred indiſcriminately by *Diplomas* and *Diſpenſations* loſe all their value in the opinion of the world. Where the ſhadow conveys ſome, even the moſt diſtant, idea of the ſubſtance, men reſpect the one for the ſake of the other; but ſo ſoon as every trace of reſemblance or connection between them is obliterated, that which has no intrinſic value, having loſt it's relative eſtimation, will ceaſe to be valued or eſteemed at all.

Now to connect this idea of a Regular Education with Academical Honours, and ſo to adjuſt our meaſures in diſpenſing them, that they may conſtantly imply that he who bears them has gone through an orderly courſe of inſtitution, and had a fair *opportunity* afforded him of improving his underſtanding, what reſidence in his Univerſity ſhall we take to be ſufficient? Is it conceivable that a ſhorter reſidence can be requiſite than Eleven Months during the courſe of Se-

ven Years? Or will any Man of Senſe and Education out of the Univerſity ſuppoſe that double that time would afford the Student a competent opportunity of making ſuch a moderate progreſs in Claſſical Learning and Philoſophy, as will enable him to appear with reputation as a Gentleman; or to purſue his particular ſtudies as a Lawyer or Phyſician; or, above all, to enter immediately on his profeſſion as a Divine? If, the young Academic's country reſidence happen to fall within the obſervation of ſuch a perſon, he will loſe him out of his neighbourhood perhaps for ſeven or eight weeks in each year, till he has thus compleated the courſe of his education. If at the end of it, he finds him a man of letters, or competently ſkilled in his profeſſion, it will be abundantly evident to him that he does not owe his improve-provements to the Univerſity: if otherwiſe, he will obſerve that Academic Honours are attained by thoſe who have had little opportunity, and taken ſmall pains, to deſerve them: and if he happen not to be prejudiced in favour of Univerſities, tis ten to one, but he concludes in general, either from the former caſe that they are unneceſſary, or from the latter that they are pernicious; either that they

are by no means requiſite to the ſupport of learning, or that they even diſcourage it, by ſtamping a currency on ſloth and ignorance. Were ſuch caſes frequent, he would ſurely have ſome reaſon on his ſide:---it is the direct tendency of abating the uſual reſidence to render them more and more frequent every day.

When we are conſidering the reputation of Academical Honours in the eyes of the world, we muſt have reſpect to the probable opinions of men; reputation having no ſeat or exiſtence elſewhere. If theſe opinions are ill founded, yet they deſerve our notice; for they may poſſibly be corrected, or they may lead us to ſome meaſures which may correct an error or ſupply a defect of our own: but if they are founded in truth and reaſon, they have a double claim to our attention. If the uſual reſidence be in truth barely ſufficient to afford the ſtudent a *very moderate opportunity* of acquiring a competent ſhare of learning, and of meriting, in ſome fair proportion, the honours he is to receive; this appears to be a ſubſtantial reaſon why it ſhould not be diminiſhed: if it is *evident to all the world* that a leſs reſidence cannot in the nature of things

afford ſuch opportunity, or give the Univerſity a decent pretext to confer ſuch honours; if moreover ſenſible men will, with the utmoſt reaſon on their ſide, value our honours only as they imply ſuch opportunity; this will co-operate with the former as a prudential conſideration: and it will ſeem pretty clear, in every point of view, that we cannot abate the uſual reſidence without depreciating them in the eyes of the world.

It ſeems to be the general opinion that the ſtatutable reſidence for the Firſt Degree cannot with any propriety be abated. The firſt four years are a very important part, and frequently the whole, of Univerſity Education. It is in this period that the Student, under the moſt favourable circumſtances, lays the Baſis of his future acquirements; he is too often obliged, at the end of it, to plunge into a profeſſion and a life of buſineſs, and finds little time or opportunity to make any conſiderable additions to the foundation he has laid. To encourage him therefore to abſent himſelf from the Univerſity in ſo important a ſtage of his education, and to releaſe him from ſo trifling a reſidence as Nine Month in the four years, has ever appeared

to me a very inconvenient exertion of the powers of Convocation; an indulgence, which like all others which are exceſſive or unſeaſonable, equally tends to prejudice the party it is deſigned to gratify, and to leſſen the reputation and weaken the authority of the party who diſpenſes it. The ſenſe of Convocation has been lately taken on this point: it is hoped the younger members of the Univerſity will profit by the example; and that they will not for the future put themſelves under the diſagreeable neceſſity of preferring a petition, which, it is eaſy to foretell, will always be oppoſed, and, I truſt, will generally be rejected.

It is not ſo well agreed how far it is expedient to abate the ſtatutable reſidence for the Second Degree. There are two reaſons generally alledged for an unlimited relaxation in this caſe. The one, the great inconvenience ariſing to the Candidate from being obliged to keep the uſual reſidence: the other, that he will be tempted, in conſequence of this inconvenience, to repair to the Siſter Univerſity, where he may be admitted to his degree without it. If the general obſervations which have been offered relative to both de-

grees appear reaſonable, theſe particular conſiderations in reſpect of the ſecond will have little weight in the ſcale; the great ends of Academical Education, and the honour and reputation of the Univerſity, being objects much ſuperior to private convenience, and far more important than an ill-directed emulation, which points rather to the Number of Graduates than to the Credit of the Degree. However, to give every conſideration it's due weight, what is this Inconvenience? The uſual reſidence, as above ſtated, is three terms or about Two Months. The ſtudies recommended by the Univerſity are well known; the public exerciſes indiſpenſably enjoined are not inconſiderable; the bare orderly performance of them requires at leaſt a fortnight, and a decent preparation for them will moſt certainly, with men of common abilities, very amply employ the remainder. Beſides the Candidate has generally, (he hurries through his education with little propriety and advantage, if he has not) ſome private ſtudies to proſecute in the Univerſity;--immediate preparation, for inſtance, for Deacon's or Prieſt's Orders, attendance on ſome lectures in either of the Faculties, a general review of his former

ſtudies, or the like. In ſhort, if he cannot with great advantage to himſelf fill up the time (if any there be) which remains after the performance of his neceſſary exerciſes, he muſt be very ſingularly circumſtanced in the ſtate of his learned acquirements: and if that very ſmall remainder ſpent in the Univerſity put him to conſiderable inconvenience in his private economy, his ſituation in this reſpect alſo muſt be very particular. As to the practice of the Univerſity of Cambridge, they have no doubt weighty reaſons for admitting it; one in particular may occur, namely, that they are generally ſuppoſed to expect more than we do from a Candidate for the Firſt Degree, in proportion as they expect leſs from a Candidate for the Second. And this very conſideration points out the apparent impropriety of imitating their practice in the former caſe, when we do it not in the latter. If an individual here and there will, by good management, contrive to obtain the Lighter Honour in each Univerſity, he is welcome: (though by the way, he ſhould *purſue* the compendious path he has taken, and *not return* to his firſt Alma Mater, whom he has thus undutifully deſerted, *for further favours*) but ſurely it ill

becomes the Univerſity of Oxford, by a partial imitation of a foreign ſtandard, to ſink the collective value of her own. If any conſiderable inconvenience ariſe from this unequal arrangement in the two Learned Bodies, it ſhould ſeem that a ſhort negociation might eaſily remedy it: or, if the matter deſerve ſo much attention, it might be made an order of this Univerſity, that no certificate of the Firſt degree ſhall be tranſmitted to the Univerſity of Cambridge, (except only in favour of thoſe who may happen to become Foundationers there) unleſs the Graduate ſhall have kept a given reſidence here for his Second.

The mention of the Public Exerciſes required for degrees reminds me of a circumſtance which ſerves to illuſtrate in another point of view the inconvenient tendency of abating the uſual reſidence; that for the Second degree more eſpecially. It has been already obſerved that the credit of Academical Honours depends greatly on the Reſidence the Graduate is obliged to keep in his Univerſity, and the Exerciſes he is expected to perform. It follows then, that as the due performance of theſe exerciſes is

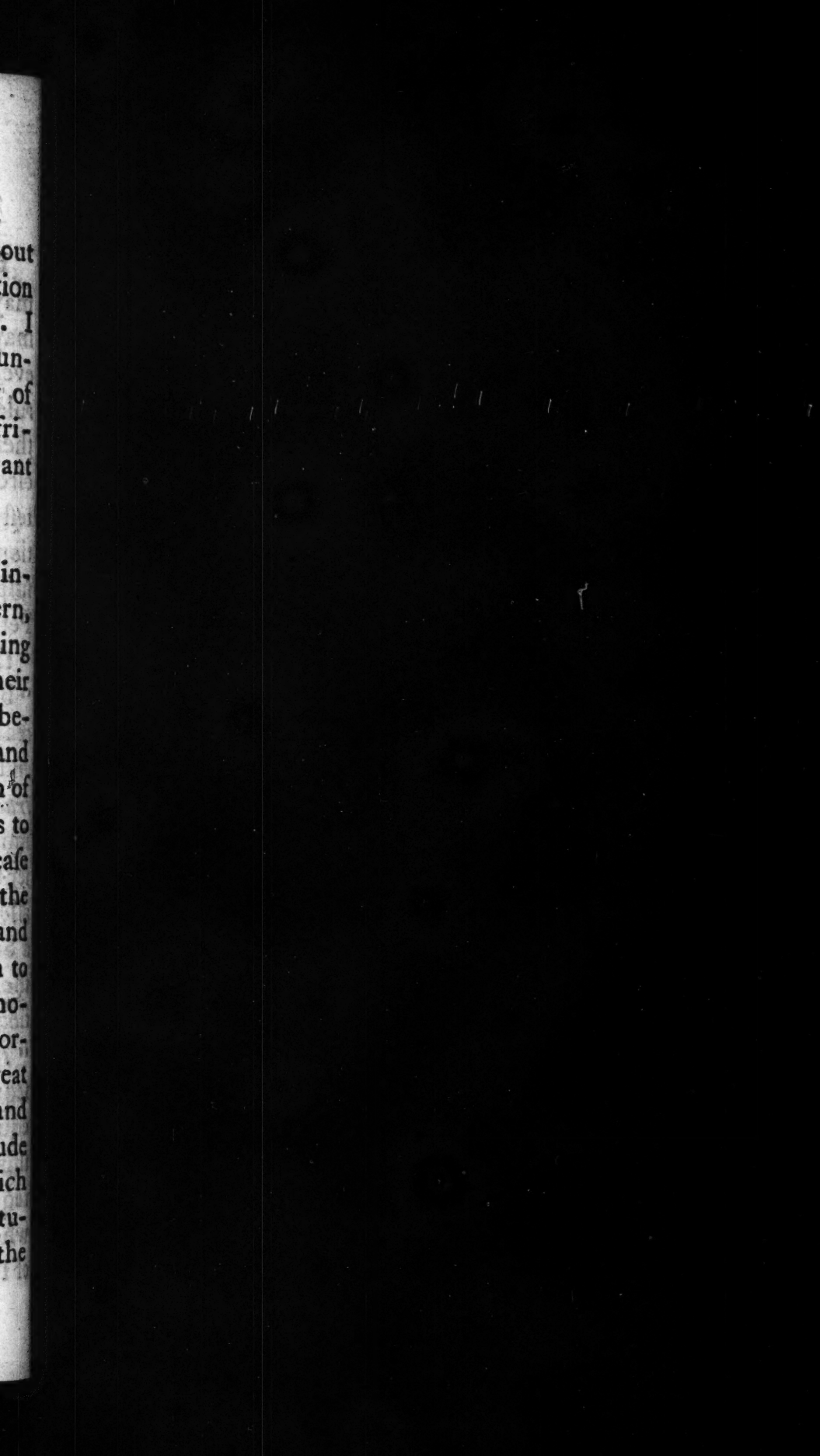
more or leſs attended to, and their dignity and reputation ſupported, juſt in the ſame proportion will the honours be eſteemed, of which they are the conditions and qualifications. Now when ſo ſhort a reſidence is made competent for a degree, as is ſcarcely ſufficient to hurry through the *Forms* of the Exerciſe, and affords the Candidate little or no opportunity of conſulting his own reputation and that of the Univerſity by a decent attention to the *Subſtance*; it is evident from the reaſon of the thing as well as from common obſervation, that, be the vigilance of the preſiding officers never ſo great, the exerciſe will daily ſink in real importance, in the eſtimation of the candidate, and in the opinion of the world. A bare formal compliance with the letter of Inſtitutions calculated for the propagation of learning, without even an *opportunity* of catching at the ſpirit of them, can have no favourable influence on the cauſe they were intended to promote; it naturally inſpires the ſtudent with a contempt of the Means, and may even lead him to undervalue the End; and an exerciſe ſo managed, as to appear to the moſt Candid Obſerver to be neither a teſt of ſome moderate attainments, nor a fair incitement to

the purſuit of them, will give him no very honourable idea of it. Thus does one inadvertent deviation from ſalutary rules almoſt neceſſarily introduce another. When the obligation to Reſidence is almoſt wholly taken off, the obligation to Exerciſe indeed remains; but it is ſuch an obligation, as has loſt more than half its influence, becauſe the party is left without a fair opportunity or inducement to fulfil it, and under a powerful temptation to trifle with and evade it.

If this way of reaſoning be juſt, it will appear that the two arguments abovementioned for abating the uſual reſidence for the degree of Maſter of Arts, ſerve only to amuſe and miſlead us; the latter, by a turn of policy not greatly worth our attention; the former, by a miſtaken good-nature and humanity, which, though ever pardonable, and even amiable, has too often a pernicious influence on the management of publick inſtitutions; which in order to alleviate the inconvenience, whether real or imaginary, of one individual, frequently lays the foundation of general indulgences greatly detrimental to the good order of the community.

It cannot indeed be denied but that caſes may poſſibly occur, wherein the legiſlature may incline to grant an equitable relaxation even of the moſt moderate and equitable rules; this of reſidence among the reſt. But then the caſe ſhould be particular; and the circumſtances of it well examined and atteſted. It does not ſeem ſufficient ſatisfaction to the Convocation to move them to ſuſpend ſalutary and neceſſary laws, that the Petitioner ſhall ſet forth in his circular papers, "that he has been detained in the country "by illneſs," and the like; he ought in all reaſon to produce a certificate of the fact, and make it appear that this fact was the *true cauſe* of his non-reſidence, and that his immediate admiſſion to his degree is of eſſential conſequence to him. Otherwiſe the allegations in a Chancellor's Letter in plea for a Suſpenſion of Statute, are as frivolous as thoſe in a petition for a Statutable Diſpenſation; "*cauſa eſt, quod ſeriis negotiis rure deten-*"*tus commode intereſſe non potuit.*---The conſequence is, the petitioner thinks them both equally available, regulates his conduct by this preſumption, at length boldly prefers his requiſition, cenſures the auſterity of thoſe who oppoſe it, laughs probably at the lenity of thoſe who grant it, and finally adviſes his

Juniors to give themſelves no concern about Statutes, when they can have a diſpenſation any day for a little money and no trouble. I would not willingly ſet the matter in an unfair light: but this is the plain tendency of admitting allegations, which are either frivolous in themſelves, or become ſo for want of reaſonable evidence.

It may not be amiſs to obſerve, for the information of thoſe whom it may concern, that a practice lately introduced, of ſolliciting the Members of Convocation to ſupport their diſpenſations in the Houſe, is not very becoming, or conſiſtent with good order; and is moreover contrary to the plain intention of the Statute Tit. 9. Sect. 3. §. 1. It ſeems to be the duty of the petitioner to ſtate his caſe *fairly* and *fully* in his application to the Chancellor and in his circular papers, and to leave the determination of the queſtion to the diſcretion of the Houſe. Without hoping to bias them by friendſhip or importunity, he may repoſe himſelf with great ſecurity on their equity and moderation and the merits of his cauſe: and may conclude that they will deny him no indulgence, which is conſiſtent with the ends of their inſtitution, and the honour and good order of the Univerſity.

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